

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) is a network of established and emerging rural institutions that work together to strengthen rural America. The principal members of the network are State Rural Development Councils in 40 of the 50 states.

Each of the State Councils, which are comprised of active members from a broad range of rural development-related organizations, is served by a full-time executive director. States differ in how they are organized and in the rural issues they decide to address.

This profile is one in a series highlighting the work of the State Councils.

For more information about the National Rural Development Partnership:

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**National Rural
Development
Partnership**

State Profile

Minnesota Rural Partners (MRP)

Minnesota Rural Partners (MRP) began in 1993 as a task force on flood recovery. In that year, massive floods had affected states along the Mississippi River, and rural communities in the Minnesota River Valley faced a crisis of historic magnitude. An informal coalition of state and federal agencies grew into the Flood Recovery Task Force that developed a simple, single application form that could be used by communities across the state to access state and federal disaster assistance. This early success led to the task force proposing development of a mechanism that would allow them to continue working collaboratively. A State Rural Development Council was formed, and today, as Minnesota Rural Partners, it continues to bring together resources and to craft simple and practical solutions for rural issues.

In achieving its goals, MRP has worked on a number of projects that showcase its unique ability to positively impact rural areas. As a result of MRP's Annual Rural Summits and the action plan for MRP that was developed, the partnership has focused on five *Northstars for Rural Minnesota*: Energizing Entrepreneurs, Lever-



aging the New Agriculture, Closing the Digital Divide, Sustaining the Landscape, and Boosting Human Capital. These Northstars are evident in many of the projects on which MRP has worked.

Current projects include Rural Entrepreneurial Academy, MN Market Hall, E-Commerce Training Corps, and the Joint International Summit on Community and Rural Development.

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Minnesota Rural Partners has a membership of more than 1,400 individuals and organizations throughout the state. Its 23-member Board of Directors includes representation from:

- ▼ U.S. Department of HUD
- ▼ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- ▼ U.S. Department of Commerce - EDA
- ▼ Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development
- ▼ Minnesota Department of Commerce
- ▼ Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- ▼ Three Tribal Representatives
- ▼ Minnesota Food Association
- ▼ First Call for Help
- ▼ The Volunteer Attorney Program
- ▼ University of Minnesota
- ▼ Center for School Change
- ▼ Southeast Service Cooperative
- ▼ Local representation from a county commissioner, an economic development commission, and a regional arts board
- ▼ Several private business owners



Printed on recycled paper

NRDP *State Profile*

July 2001

Minnesota Rural Partners at Work

Rural Entrepreneurial Academy

MRP works to energize all types of entrepreneurs: civic, social, and business. With the assistance of the Kauffman Foundation for Entrepreneurial Leadership, MRP convened the Rural Entrepreneurial Academy, which brought together both entrepreneurs and those providing assistance to entrepreneurs. As a direct result of the Academy's work, the governor and the legislature have received recommendations on technical assistance, infrastructure, capital access, and education. Significant policy changes have resulted from this work, including expanding a financial program to include rural minority businesspersons. Most importantly, because of MRP's involvement, Minnesota educational institutions will offer entrepreneurial and leadership development training for rural entrepreneurs.

*"Minnesota Rural Partners
makes heroes out
of others."*

**Allen Gerber,
Southeast Service
Cooperative
Education Board
Representative**

reach to minority populations. For example, because of MRP's coordinating efforts, the New Immigrant Project provided the first FSA loan to a Hmong farmer to purchase land. Throughout the entire project, MRP's coordination has resulted in greater outreach to rural citizens and an expanded market for their products.

E-Commerce Training Corps

MRP partnered with the University of Minnesota Extension and AT&T Communications to establish an E-Commerce Training Corps to deliver know-how to Minnesota small businesses. By providing training to rural residents on advanced telecommunication, demand for those services will increase. Training is being provided to over 100 individuals who in turn will train individuals and business in small business e-commerce applications.

Joint International Summit on Community and Rural Development

In July 2001, MRP hosted its annual Rural Summit in conjunction with the International Community Development Society and the National Rural Development Partnership Annual Conferences. The summit highlighted the policy, research, and practice implications of forging working partnerships to build viable rural and urban communities. By bringing together rural researchers, practitioners and policy makers, MRP facilitated an opportunity for rural practitioners from around the country to begin the process of developing a rural policy for both the state and the nation.

Minnesota Market Hall

Working with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the membership of the St. Paul Farmers Market, MRP has coordinated partnerships that will result in the development of an indoor year-round market. Related to the work of the Market Hall, MRP's efforts, in partnership with USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Minnesota Food Association (MFA), have produced very tangible results in out-